ARTICLE III.

VIEW OF THE ANCIENT GEOGRAPHY OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS OF AMERICA,

FROM ACCOUNTS CONTAINED IN OLD NORTHERN MANUSCRIPTS.

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ANCIENT GEOGRAPHY OF

THE ARCTIC REGIONS OF AMERICA.

The east coast of Greenland was, in ancient times, uninhabited by Europeans; although, from the account of Are Frode, the earliest Icelandic historian, it would appear that on the discovery of the country and survey of its coast, there were found, both on the east coast and on the west coast, remains indicative of their having been resorted to at an earlier period by the Skrœlingar or Esquimaux of America. The *Svalbarde* of the ancient Scandinavians, discovered in 1194, appears to be the tract of coast surveyed in 1761 by Volkert Bohn, of the island of Foehr, in Denmark, and rediscovered by Scoresby, by whom it is called Liverpool coast. The *Gunnbiarnarsker*, or Gunnbiarnareyiar, discovered in 877 by Gunnbiörn Ulfson, will be the islands seen off the coast by Capt. W. A. Graah, R. N., in latitude 65° 20′ N.; *Hvitserk*, the southernmost promontory, Cape Farewell; the chief seat of the colony, *Eystribygð*, the present district of Juliancehaab. The most important of the colonized firths are named, in order, from South to North, in four original written sources; of which the latest and most circumstantial is a Chorography by Ivar Bardson, who, in 1341, was sent by Hakon, bishop of Bergen, to Greenland, and who for many years was superintendent of the episcopal see of Gardar. *Heriulfsnes* with *Heriulfsfirth*, where Heriulf Bardson settled in 986, and where his son, Biarne Heriulfson, arrived in the autumn of the same year after having seen the more southern Amer-

ican coast, is the Ikigeit of the present day. Of the church mentioned in Bishop Gudmund Arason's Saga, some of the ruins are still left, and several inscriptions have here been found. *Ketilsfirth* with its two churches is the modern Tessermiut, where Mr. J. J. A. Aroe found a quantity of ruins. *Rafnsfirth*, which, in the first year of the landnam or colonization, 986, was colonized by the landnamsmann Rafn, is now Ournartok. According to the ancient description of Ivar Bardson of the 14th century, there were in this firth islets with springs of hot water. There are in the island of Ounartok three warm springs, which have given to the island and firth their Esquimaux name, signifying in that language the boiling. Capt. Graah, who visited the place in July, 1828, found the temperature of the water in these springs ranging from 26 to 33½° R. *Siglufirth* is now Agluitsok; here the rudera of Vogar church were discovered by the Rev. Valentine Müller, who visited this firth in the years 1832 and 1833, on behalf of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries. He saw, moreover, the ruins of a mansion belonging to the king, by Ivar Bardson called Foss, or waterfall, situated near a large stream, forming a waterfall of 200 feet in height. *Einarsfirth* is Igalikko; the ruins of the cathedral and episcopal see of *Gardar*, (which was founded in 1126, and stood for upwards of three centuries) were rediscovered at Kaksiârsuk on the eastern arm of this firth. *Ericsfirth*, where the chief leader of the landnamsmenn or colonists, Eric the Red, settled in 986, is now Tunnudluarbik, together with the northern arm of Igalikkofirth, at which the ruins of the principal settlement of *Brattahlid*, with Leidar kirkia (the church of the district), have been found, and especially, among the numerous buildings there, rudera of the house of Brattahlid itself, so denominated from its being built up against the side of a steep precipice (from *brattr* and *hlið*). The Rev. Mr. George F. Joergensen, who has furnished a description and ground-plan of the whole settlement, which may be com-

pared to an entire town, observes that a steep rock forms one of the walls of this house, the building of which was accomplished with incredible labour. This house was built by Eric the Red, who in the year 986 made it his residence. It was subsequently occupied, at the commencement of the 11th century, by his celebrated son Leif the Happy, and by his grandson Thorkel Leifson; and it continued, down to the latest times of the colony, to be the abode of the sheriffs (logmenn). Here, in this house, the far-famed couple, Thorfinn Karlsefne and Gudrid Thorbiornsdotter, celebrated, in 1007, their nuptials, and determined on their remarkable voyage of discovery to that more southern land which 7 years before had been discovered and visited by Leif Ericson, viz. Vinland (the present Massachusetts and Rhode Island). *Isafirth*, which was the most western firth in the Eystribygð, will be the great bay in which lies the island of Sennerut. One arm of this firth was called *Utibliksfirth*, a name adopted by the ancient Northmen from the Esquimaux, with whom they must consequently have held intercourse at an early period in Greenland; for it is the Esquimaux word *Itiblik*, signifying an isthmus, and there is here a remarkable isthmus which the Esquimaux still call by that name. Eystribygð comprised anciently 190 settlements, with 12 churches, of most of which unquestionable ruins have been found. The site of *Vestribygd*, which included but 90 settlements and 4 churches, lay farther towards the North; and the ancient *Steinsnes* must be placed at Aglomerscet; *Rangefirth* at Amaraglik; *Agnafirth*, with a church, at Hope, in Baals Revier in the present district of Godthaab, and *Lysufirth* will be Isertok in Sukkertoppen's district. Of the ancient *Norðrsetur*, or summer stations for fishing and hunting, we may mention *Biarney* (which had been already visited in 1007 by Thorfinn Karlsefne in his voyage to Vinland), now Disco, the island of Kingiktórsoak to the North of the most northern of the present Danish establishments Upernivik, where a curious

runic stone of 1135 was found in 1824, and *Kroksfirth*, through which some clergymen from the episcopal see of Gardar performed, in 1266, an exploratory voyage, and which, from the astronomical notices contained in the ancient account of this journey, are proved to be Sir James Lancaster's Sound and Barrow's Strait, together with Prince Regent's Inlet.